

April 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee

**Attendees**

**Committee members**

Ralph Hambrick, Sue Cecil, John Pearsall, Greg Velzy, John Zeugner

**Others**

Jack Berry, Richmond Metro CVB; Nick Britton, VCU; Lyle Browning, Architectural Society of Virginia; Buzz Kraft, Richmond Raft Company; Bill Trout, Virginia Canal Society.

The minutes of the March 10<sup>th</sup> were approved as presented.

**Belle Isle Grant and Plans:**

Jack Berry gave a brief history of plans to enhance Belle Isle. He said that \$200,000 is available from the Civil War Trails program to be used to interpret the Civil War Camp on Belle Isle, provide Wheelchair ramps to the river, establish permanent stone markers for important sites, and prepare brochure of the Islands history. A time line for accomplishing these initiatives is; 1. Public works and VDOT will complete their environmental study; 2. Historic Resources will complete an interpretive guide and lastly, the wheelchair ramp will be built. Mr. Berry said that these efforts are underway and should certainly be in place in time for the 2007 celebration.

Mr. Browning noted that a large 1883 map of Belle Isle is owned by the Addison Old Dominion Company in Chester, but that the asking price is quite high.

In general discussion, everyone agreed that any restoration should emphasize the wild and natural aspects of Belle Isle.

**Downtown Takeout Update**

Dr. Hambrick said that the plans for the takeout are progressing. An MOU has been developed by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Community Facilities for a cooperative arrangement between that Department and the Department of Public Utilities. A meeting will be held next week to review the draft MOU. He said that the Greenways conference being held in May has put the design of the boating facility on its workshop agenda. He added that earlier conversations had indicated and that funds may be available from the Dept. of Rec and Parks for site improvement.

## **Riverside drive Update**

The shoulder stabilization project near Pony Pasture Rapids is planned to begin by late June or early July. Everything the Falls Committee recommended has been included in the specs.

## **James River Park Access Policy**

The present policy for public access to James River Park was discussed at length. Suggestions made included special permits and establishing a Park Ranger system. Dr. Hambrick was asked to invite a senior member of Department of Recreation, Parks, and Community Facilities to attend our next meeting to discuss the issue.

## **Open Discussion**

Dr. Trout suggested members read a new book "Maritime Richmond" by Dale Totty that presents an interesting history of the James as it flows through the city.

Dr. Trout will lead a canoe trip on the canal on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, as part of the Governor's Conference on Greeways, Blueways, and Trails hosted by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The trip is limited to 12 participants. Mr. Velzy will provide canoes and handle logistics for the trip.

Mr. Zeugner reported that The Friends of City Parks held a meeting with Mr. Goldman, Policy Assistant to Mayor Wilder. Topics discussed included security measures, deferred repairs in some parks, and having a master plan for city parks and view shed protection. There will be a meeting of this group on May 27, place to be announced.

Nick Britton is completing his study of access to the James River in the greater Richmond area and will present his study and recommendation at the Committee's May meeting.

Dr. Hambrick suggested the Committee take a look at the Biofilter being constructed by Ukrops at the Stratford Hills Shopping Center.

Buzz Kraft offered to provide a rafting trip for city officials in the near future.

Dr. Hambrick distributed a map of the riverside area outside the floodwall from 14<sup>th</sup> Street to the overlook at the East end of Brown's Island and suggested that the Committee consider its potential for treatment as a park.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Submitted by Sue Cecil